Claims

[c1]   1. A method of delivering an identifier associated with a referring source to an on-line retailer comprising the steps of:

receiving a response from said retailer prompted by a request to visit a web site maintained by said retailer;

examining said response to determine if said identifier is present in said response; and if said identifier is not present in said response, re-issuing said request to visit said web-site of said on-line retailer with said identifier added thereto.

[c2]   2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of discarding said received response when said request is re-issued.

[c3]   3. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of selecting said identifier from a list of identifiers.

[c4]   4. The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of selecting said identifier from a list of identifiers based upon said retailer from which said response was received.

[c5]   5. The method of claim 4 wherein said request is not re-issued if said list does not contain an identifier associated with the retailer from which said response was received.

[c6]   6. The method of claim 4 further comprising the step of passing said response to a browser or other software for display to a user when said re-quest is not re-issued.

[c7]   7. The method of claim 3 wherein said list of identifiers includes identifiers associated with a plurality of known retailers.

[c8]   8. The method of claim 1 wherein said request is not re-issued if said response contains said identifier associated with said retailer sending said response.

[c9]   9. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of passing said response to a browser or other software for display to a user when said re-quest is not re-issued

[c10]

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of adding a second

identifier to said re-issued request identifying a specific user.

[cl1]   11. A method of delivering an identifier associated with a referring source to an on-line retailer comprising the steps of:

    examining a request from a user to visit said retailer's web site; and

    if said retailer is known, adding said identifier to said request and issuing said request.

[cl2]   12. The method of claim 11 wherein said identifier is selected from a list of identifiers, based upon said known retailer.

[cl3]   13. The method of claim 12 wherein said list of identifiers includes identifiers associated with a plurality of known retailers.

[cl4]   14. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of adding a second identifier to said issued request identifying a specific user.

[cl5]   15. A system for delivering an identifier associated with a referring source to an on-line retailer comprising:

    a list of known retailers and an associated list of identifiers for said referring source; and

    software means for intercepting responses from the web sites of said on-line retailers, said software means being capable of determining if the proper identifier is present in the response and, if not, issuing a request to link to said web site, said request having an identifier selected from said list appended thereto.

[cl6]   16. The system of claim 15 wherein said software means selects said identifier from said list depending upon which on-line retailer sent said response.

[cl7]   17. The system of claim 15 wherein said software means adds a second identifier to said issued request which identifies a specific user

[cl8]   18. A system for delivering an identifier associated with a referring source to an on-line retailer comprising:

    a list of known retailers and an associated list of identifiers for said referring source; and

software means for intercepting requests from a user to link to the web sites of one of said on-line retailers, said software means being capable of determining if the proper identifier is present in the request and, if not, issuing a modified request to link to said web site, said modified request having an identifier selected from said list appended thereto.

[c19] 19. The system of claim 18 wherein said software means selects said identifier from said list depending upon which on-line retailer said user is attempting to link to.

[c20] 20. The system of claim 19 wherein said software means adds a second identifier to said issued request which identifies a specific user.

[c21] 21. A method of identifying a referring source to an on-line retailer comprising the steps of:

examining an Internet address for the presence of an identification code associated with said referring source, wherein said referring source is affiliated with each of said plurality of retailers;

selecting a referring source identification code from a plurality of known identification codes when said address is indicative of a retailer to which said referring source is affiliated; and

amending said Internet address to incorporate said selected identification code.

[c22] 22. The method of claim 21 wherein the step of examining said Internet address occurs when receiving a response to a request to link to said Internet address.

[c23] 23. The method of claim 22 further comprising the step of amending said Internet address to incorporate a second identification code to uniquely identify a user.

[c24] 24. The method of claim 22 further comprising the step of re-issuing said request to link to said amended Internet address.

[c25] 25. The method of claim 24 further comprising the step of discarding said response.

[c26] 26. The method of claim 22 wherein said response is passed to a browser or other

software for display to a user when said identification code is present in said Internet address.

[c27]   27. The method of claim 21 wherein the step of examining said Internet address occurs prior to issuing said request

[c28]   28. The method of claim 27 wherein a user enters said Internet address or selects said Internet address by clicking a hyperlink.

[c29]   29. The method as recited in claim 27 where the step of amending said Internet address further includes the step of including said identification code in said Internet address in a manner required by each of said plurality of retailers.

[c30]   30. The method of claim 27 further comprising the step of amending said Internet address to incorporate a second identification code to uniquely identify a user